

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSM-03 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4285
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IS
SUBJECT: BEGIN OPENS HERUT CONVENTION

1. OPPOSITION LEADER MANAHEM BEGIN WAS THE "STAR" AND THE
FEATURED SPEAKER IN THE CEREMONIAL OPENING IN JERUSALEM
JANUARY 2 OF THE HERUT PARTY'S FOUR DAY CONVENTION. HIS SPEECH
WAS FREQUENTLY INTERRUPTED BY SUSTAINED APPLAUSE FROM THE HIGHLY
PARTISAN AUDIENCE.

2. BEGIN DECLARED THAT A GOVERNMENT FORMED BY THE LIKUD (THE
THREE PARTY BLOC HE HEADS AND OF WHICH HERUT IS A CONSTITUENT
PART) WOULD PREVENT ANOTHER WAR AND THAT HE WOULD TAKE THE
INITIATIVE WITH PEACE MOVES THROUGH A FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT (READ
U.S.). WHILE HE ALLOWED FOR TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE IN SINAI AND
THE GOLAN, HE REITERATED HIS ADAMANT OPPOSITION TO YIELDING
ANY TERRITORY ON THE WEST BANK. IN A REFERENCE TO
SADAT'S RECENT WASHINGTON POST INTERVIEW, BEGIN SAID " FRIVOLOUS
PEOPLE WOULD REGARD (SADAT'S PALESTINE-JORDAN PROPOSAL) AS
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PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE," WHEREAS IT IS ACTUALLY A DANGEROUS
MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF A WEST BANK PALESTINIAN STATE. SUCH A
STATE WOULD BECOME THE MAIN SOVIET BASE IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM
WHICH COMMUNIST CONTROL WOULD SPREAD. HE DWELT AT LENGTH
ON THE THREAT TO ISRAEL OF AN INDEPENDENT PALESTINE.

3. BEGIN DESCRIBED THE U.S.- ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP AS ONE OF

MUTUALITY, IN THAT ISRAEL MAKES A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO AMERICAN INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. AS AN EXAMPLE, HE CITED ISRAEL'S ACTION TO DISCOURAGE A SYRIAN INVASION OF JORDAN IN 1970 AND CALIMED THAT ISRAEL HAD AT U.S. BEHEST COOPERATED IN KEEPING THE SUEZ CANAL CLOSED TO HINDER SOVIET SUPPLIES FROM REACHING THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.

4. A GOOD SHARE OF BEGIN'S SPEECH WAS DEVOTED TO DOMESTIC ISSUES, WITH RINGING DENUNCIATIONS OF THE ALIGNMENT'S RECORD ON THE ECONOMY, LABOR RELATIONS, IMMIGRATION, EDUCATION, HOUSING AND OTHER ASPECTS OF ISRAELI SOCIETY. HE ANNOUNCED THAT THE LIKUD WOULD SUPPORT THE HALACHA (ORTHODOX RELIGIOUS LAW) DEFINITION OF WHO IS A JEW, TO THE OBVIOUS DELIGHT OF THE NRP LEADER AND RECENTLY-RESIGNED INTERIOR MINISTER YOSEF BURG. (BURG WAS SEATED ON THE PLATFORM WITH SUCH OTHER NON-LIKUD LUMINARIES AS DEFENSE MINISTER SHIMON PERES, JUSTICE MINISTER HAIM ZADEK, AND COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER HAIM BAR-LEV.) PRIOR TO BEGIN'S SPEECH, TO CONVENTION CHAIRMAN ANNOUNCED THE EZER WEIZMAN WILL DIRECT THE LIKUD'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN; WEIZMAN WAS IMMEDIATELY CONGRATULATED BY BAR-LEV WHO WAS SEATED NEXT TO HIM ON THE PLATFORM AND WHO WILL HAVE THE SAME JOB IN THE LABOR ALIGNMENT'S CAMPAIGN. WITH THE CEREMONIAL OPENING CONCLUDED, THE CONVENTION MOVED TO TEL AVIV FOR ITS WORKING SESSIONS.

5. COMMENT: WEIZMAN'S ACCEPTANCE OF THIS KEY ROLE IN THE LIKUD'S CAMPAIGN CAME AMIDST RUMORS THAT HE WAS INCREASINGLY RESTIVE OVER HIS LACK OF SUCCESS IN URGING GREATER MODERATION IN THE LIKUD'S POSITION ON TERRITORIAL ISSUES. HIS NEW ROLE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SHOULD PUT TO REST SPECULATION THAT HE WAS CONSIDERING BOLTING THE LIKUD.

6. ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE LIKUD AS A WHOLE WILL ADOPT BEGIN'S ENDORSEMENT OF THE HALACHA DEFINITION OF WHO IS A JEW, THE MOVE WILL APPEAL TO THE NRP AND FACILITATE THE LATTER'S PARTICIPATION IN A LIKUD-CONTROLLED COALITION SHOULD THE LATTER BE ASKED TO FORM A GOVERNMENT.

7. WHILE THERE WAS LITTLE NEW IN BEGIN'S PERORATION, EXCEPT PERHAPS HIS STAND ON DEFINING WHO IS A JEW, HIS OPPOSITION TO A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE STRIKES US AS PARTICULARLY STRONG. THUS HIS SPEECH GENERALLY DID LITTLE TO CHANGE THE LIKUD'S IMAGE AS A WAR PARTY, A PERCEPTION THAT OVER THE YEARS HAS HAMPERED HERUT IN ITS EFFORTS TO BE ACCEPTED AS A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THE LABOR PARTY. THE LIKUD HOPES THAT ITS EXPECTED EMPHASIS ON DOMESTIC ISSUES DURING THE CAMPAIGN WILL HELP IN THE ENDEAVOR.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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